

XXXI. *Botanical Description of the Benjamin Tree of Sumatra.*

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Read May 17, 1787.

**T**HOUGH GARCÍAS AB HORTO, GRIM, and SYLVIUS, were acquainted with the real tree from which Benjamin or Benzoin is collected, their descriptions of it are so imperfect and insufficient for its botanical determination, that succeeding botanists have fallen into many errors concerning it; and it is remarkable, that although this drug was always imported from the East-Indies, most of the later writers on the *Materia Medica* have conceived it to be collected from a species of *Laurus*, native of Virginia, to which, from this erroneous supposition, they have given the trivial name of Benzoin. This mistake seems to have originated with Mr. RAY, who in his *Historia Plantarum*, Vol. II. p. 1845. at the end of his account of the *Arbor Benivifera* of GARCÍAS, says: “Ad nos  
“scripsit D. TANCREDUS ROBINSON Arborem resiniferam odoratam foliis citrinis prædictæ haud abfimilem transmissam  
“fuisse e Virginia a D. BANISTER, ad illustrissimum Præfulem D. HENR. COMPTON, in cujus instructissimo horto  
“cultæ est.—Arbor ista Virginiana Citrii, vel Limonii foliis  
“Benzoinum fundens, in horto reverendissimi Episcopi culta.”

This error was detected by LINNÆUS, but another was substituted by him in its place; for in his *Mantissa Plantarum Altera*,

Altera, he tells us, that Benjamin is furnished by a shrub described there under the name of Croton Benzoe, and afterwards in the Supplementum Plantarum, describes again the same plant, under the name of Terminalia Benzoin. M. JACQUIN, who had been informed that this shrub was called by the French *Bienjoint*, supposes, with reason, that the similar sound of that word with *Benjoin*, the French name for Benjamin, may have occasioned this mistake \*.

Since that period Dr. HOUTTUYN has described the Benjamin Tree of Sumatra; but for want of good specimens has been so unfortunate as to mistake the genus to which it belongs. It is hoped, therefore, that the following description and annexed figure (see Tab. XII.) may not be unworthy a place in the Philosophical Transactions; they are made from dried specimens procured from Sumatra by Mr. MARSDEN, F. R. S. at the request of Sir JOSEPH BANKS, Bart. P. R. S. and clearly prove that this tree agrees in the parts of fructification with the *Styrax* of LINNÆUS.

STYRAX *Benzoin*, foliis oblongis acuminatis subtus tomentosis, racemis compositis longitudine foliorum.

Benjui. *Garcias ab Horto in Clusii Exoticis*, p. 155.

Arbor Benzoini. *Grim in Ephemer. Acad. Nat. Curios. Dec. 2. Ann. I. pag. 370. fig. 31. Sylvius in Valentini Historia Simplicium*, pag. 487.

Benjuin. *Radermacher in Act. Societ. Bataviæ, vol. III. pag. 44.*

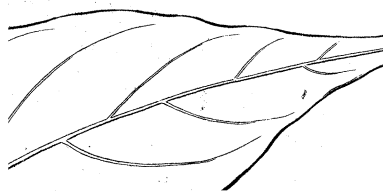
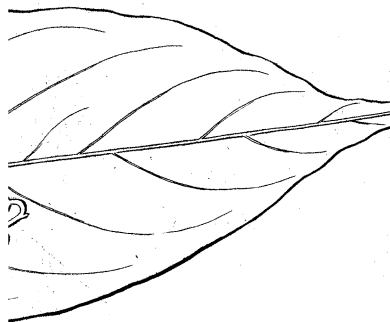
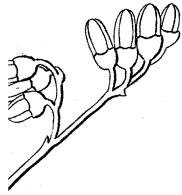
Benjamin or Benzoin. *Marsden's Hist. of Sumatra, pag. 123.*

Laurus Benzoin. *Houttuyn in Act. Harlem. vol. XXI. pag. 265. tab. 7.*

*Habitat* in Sumatra. h.

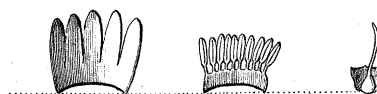
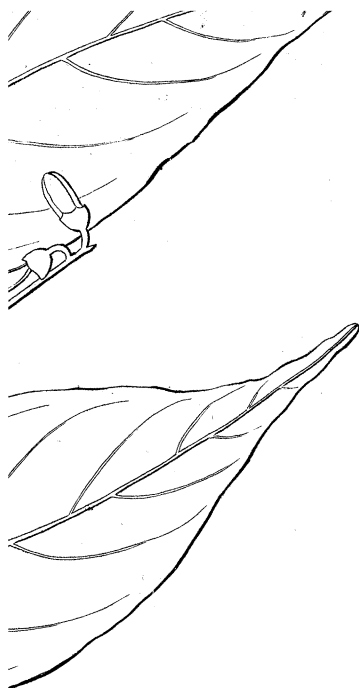
\* Hort. Vindob. vol. III. p. 51.







*Styrax Benzoin.*



Bağcı

DESCRIPTION.

*Rami* teretes, tomentosi.

*Folia* alterna, petiolata, oblonga, integerrima, acuminata, venosa, supra glabra, subtus tomentosa, palmaria. *Petiolæ* teretes, striati, canaliculati, tomentosi, brevissimi.

*Racemi* axillares, compositi, longitudine fere foliorum. *Pedunculi communes* tomentosi; *partiales* alterni, patentes, tomentosi. *Pedicelli* brevissimi. *Floræ* secundi.

*Calyx* campanulatus, obsoletissime quinquedentatus, extus tomentosus, linea longior.

*Petala* quinque, (basi forte connata) linearia, obtusa, extus tomento tenuissimo cinerea, calyce quadruplo longiora.

*Filamenta* decem, receptaculo inferta, petalis paulo breviora, inferne connata in cylindrum longitudine calycis, superne infra antheras ciliata. *Antheræ* lineares, filamentis longitudinaliter adnatæ, iisque dimidio breviores.

*Germen* superum, ovatum, tomentosum. *Stylus* filiformis, staminibus longior. *Stigma* simplex.





*Styrax Benzoin.*